

THE TRANSLATIONS AND MEANINGS OF METAPHORS THAT USED IN “HOJOKI”



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Haydarova Umida

Ferghana state university Department of practical English

e-mail: umiimija@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Kamo no Chomei (1155-1216) was a famous recluse of medieval Japan, as well as Saigyō and Kenko. Although he was active among a group of distinguished waka poets under the patronage of ex-emperor Gotoba, and was seen to be secured with a position in the court society, he became more and more discontent with his life as a courtier. Realizing the ephemerality, or impermanence (mujo), of the world, he eventually decided to leave the capital; that is, to seclude himself. All the more, he did not abandon the way of poetry even after taking the tonsure. Moreover, metaphors were analyzed in “Hojoki” and from their meaning can be seen that the metaphors were used to describe the impermanence of world, and life. “Man” cannot escape from the law of transience either. Man, as long as he or she is, comes and goes, dies the moment he or she is born; there is nothing more reasonable than that.

Keywords: *Kamo no Chomei, Saigyō and Kenko, “Hojoki”, “Man”, Gotoba.*

Kamono Chomei (1153-1216) lived as a poet, musician, writer who lived in Kamakura era. His father was a monk in Kamo temple, and died when Chomei was 8 years old. After that his grandmother took care of him but he lived under spiritual pressure and difficult life. Despite of difficult life, he desired to read books and loved music. He was touched by “Hoshshinshu”, a collection of waka (The form of Japanese poetry most familiar to Americans is the haiku, the 17-syllable poem that reached the height of its development in the seventeenth century)¹, which influenced Buddhism and “Hojoki” was written in 1207 under the book’s affect. Although he was born in monk family, Chomei accepted Buddhism later, and the religion reflected his works and Chomei try to explain the rules of Buddhism much easier to people. He decided to turn his back on society, took Buddhist vows, and became a hermit, living outside the capital. This was somewhat unusual for the time, when those who turned their backs on the world usually joined monasteries. Along with the poet-priest Saigyō he is representative of the literary recluses of his time, and his celebrated essay Hojoki (An account of a ten-foot-square hut) is representative of the genre known as “recluse literature”².

Yanase Kazuo (1967) said that Hojoki is an important and popular short work of the early Kamakura period. The work depicts the Buddhist concept of impermanence (mujo’) through the description of various disasters such as earthquake, famine, whirlwind and conflagration that befall the people of the capital city Kyoto. The author Chomei, who in his early career worked as court poet and was also an accomplished player of the biwa and koto, became a Buddhist monk in his fifties and moved farther and farther into the mountains, eventually living in a 10-foot square hut located at Mt.Hino. The work has been classified both as belonging to the zuihitsu genre and Buddhist literature.

T.Tomohiro (2009) wrote that “Kamono Chomei was a famous recluse of medieval Japan, as well as Saigyō and Kenko. Although he was active among a group of distinguished waka poets

¹ http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_600ce_waka.htm(24.01.2022)

² <http://lib.ru/JAPAN/kamono.txt>

under the patronage of ex-emperor Gotoba, and was seen to be secured with a position in the court society, he became more and more discontent with his life as a couretier. Realizing the ephemerality, or impermanence(mujo), of the world, he eventually decided to leave the capital, that is, to seclude himself (p.70) ”³.

Keene Donald(1955)wrote that “Kamono Chomei regarded at the violence and chaos of his lifetime Buddhist insight , and wrote lyrically and reflectively about the tragedy of human life (p.97) ”⁴.

The opening sentence of “Hojoki” is famous in Japanese literature as an expression of mujo, the transience of things:

1. ゆく川の流は絶えずしてしかも元の水にあらず。よどみに浮かぶうたかたは、かつ消え、かつ結びて、久しくとどまりたたためしなし。

(The current of the flowing river does not cease, and yet the water is not the same water as before. The foam that floats on stagnant pools, now vanishing, now forming, never stays the same for long. So, too, it is with the people and dwellings of the world.)⁵.

Given words such as “flowing river”, “water” and “stagnant pools” were looked like people and dwellings of the world. How can we say that so easily? Are there any proves to determine “river” means “people lives”? The first thing to consider is Lakoff and Johnson concepts about metaphors. Lakoff and Johnson showed(1979) that metaphor is for most people device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish – a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristics of language alone, a matter of words rather than thoughts and action. For this reason, most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor. We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. For example:

Argument is war.

Your claims are indefensible.

He attacked every weak point in my argument.

I demolished his argument.

I’ve never won an argument with him.

It is important to see that we don’t just talk about arguments in terms of war. We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies.

Therefore, if we consider the meaning of river is life, we use a few phrases related to them. For example:

- a) The *elixir* of life means the target of life and It is related to water.
- b) Life is *flowing* fast.
- c) The *surge* of life

“From such passages, -write Tamamura Kyo (2009) -it can be assumed that Chomei considered man and dwelling as having something in common with regard to the notion of impermanence, and that they can, he thought, embody the law of impermanence more explicitly than any other things. This point must not be overlooked, as the notion of impermanence is without doubt the most important theme of Hojoki”.

Chomei describes his “dwelling”, the hermitage where he spent his eremitic life,

³ 玉村きよ. 徒然草と無常. -日本: 大修館書店、2009. - P. 70.

⁴ Keene D. Anthology of Japanese literature, from the earliest era to the mid-nineteenth century (UNESCO collection of representative works) . - NY.: Grove Press、1955. - P. 97.

⁵ Keene Donald “An account of my hut”, -Grove Press, 1955

Also the words “river” and “water” are given as the metaphor of “cosmos”, “world”, “change of form” and “life” in the dictionary of international symbols (p. 209)

2. よどみに浮かぶうたかたは、かつ消え、かつ結びて、久しくとどまりたたるためしなし。

(The bubbles that float upon its pools now disappear, now form a new, but never endure long. And so it is with people in this world, and with their dwellings).

a) 浮かぶうたかた means bubble and also it symbolize the shortness of our life. And it is given as a symbol of time in the dictionary.

Lakoff and Johnson say that the metaphor by consists of two: the “basis of origin”(sauce domain), in which the consciousness cavity(mental space) is similar, that is, the phenomena are coherent, the analogy consists of the “basis of purpose”(Target domain)to which the phenomena belong, and the analysis of the metaphor “Argument is war” passes . In the same form, let's consider the metaphor “River”, which is used in the “life”.

Correspondence

sauce domain

target domain

RiverWorld

Water.....human or people

The flow of water.....change, continuity

Bubbles.....human life

We can conclude that river, water, bubble metaphors serviced to describe life, our world and people.

3. 玉敷の都のうちに、棟を並べ、薨を争へる、高き、賤しき、人の住....

(In our dazzling capital the houses of high and low crowd the streets, a jostling throng of roof and tile, and have done so down the generations – yet ask if this is truly so and you discover that almost no house has been there from of old. Some burned down last year and this year were rebuilt. Others were once grand mansions, gone to ruin, where now small houses stand).

The (3) example was used two metaphors to describe life(home) and world (people), at the same time they were contradict each other. If people live longer, may be their home burns or ruin, or home is stand but people dies.

T.Kyo (2009) say that in the course of his writing, two words, “man” and “dwelling”, often appear contiguously.What is more, this happens when he talks about the law of impermanence, the idea that was sweeping the country at that age.

4. その主と住みかと、無常を争ふさま、いわば朝顔の露に異ならず。

(An owner and his home vie in their impermanence, as the vanishing dew upon the morning glory. The dew may disappear while the flower remains –yet it lives on only to fade with the morning sun. Or perhaps the flower wilts while the dew still lies – but though it stays, it too will be gone before the evening)

The (4) example was given dew and glory. Glory is world and dew is people' life or on the other hand, dew is world and glory is people. And all of them describe the impermanence of our life and us⁶.

To sum up, metaphors were analyzed in “Hojoki” and from their meaning can be seen that the metaphors were used to describe the impermanence of world, and life.

“Man” cannot escape from the law of transience either. Man, as long as he or she is, comes and goes, dies the moment he or she is born; there is nothing more reasonable than that.

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